

## *Tallahassee Democrat*

### **Attorney gives of his time generously**

*For the public good*

**By James L. Rosica**

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For the past 20 years, attorney Richard M. Smith has helped senior citizens with their legal needs, free of charge.

But Smith, like many volunteers, doesn't want any accolades.

"I'm no saint," the 80-year-old Tallahasseean said. "I'm just a country lawyer."

His assistant, attorney Twyla Sketchley, sat behind his shoulder and silently mouthed, "He is a saint."

Every month, Smith visits the Smith Williams Center in the Bond community and the Wakulla County Senior Citizens Council building in Crawfordville to advise seniors on wills, power of attorney and other legal matters.

Smith practiced law for a living until 1982. Since then, he's been semi-retired, devoting himself to helping fellow seniors who are needy.

"I'm getting unable to do much physically, but my brain hasn't quit," said Smith, who walks with a cane. "And I'd rather people ask a foolish question now than have them make a dumb mistake later."

Smith and Sketchley helped Beatrice Jackson at the Smith Williams Center on Wednesday. Jackson, who said she was "over 60," needed help with estate planning.

"He's not through with me yet ... but he's done a real good job," said Jackson, a retired state worker.

Over the years, Smith said, he's helped clients with not only wills but also adoptions, divorces and even animal control cases. "Someone's cat was bit by a dog, as I recall," he said.

Smith coordinates his volunteer lawyering through Legal Services of North Florida, a nonprofit organization serving low-income families and individuals.

"He's such a fine, fine person," said executive director Kris Knab. Without him, "there would be a huge (number) of people who would go without assistance. ... We're so impressed with his dedication and commitment."

Also impressed is his cousin, Chesterfield Smith, former president of the American Bar Association and chairman emeritus of the state's powerful Holland & Knight law firm.

"I'm real proud of him," said Smith, 85, who went to the University of Florida's law school at the same time as Richard. "Even then, he would worry about pro bono work and has done it most of his life."